A Manifestation

FROM

Lieutenant Col. *John Lilburne*, Mr. *William Walwyn*, Mr. *Thomas Prince*, and Mr. *Richard Overton*,

(Now Prisoners in the TOWER of *London*)

And others, commonly (though unjustly)

STYLED

LEVELLERS.

Intended for their

FVLL VINDICATION

FROM

The many aspersions cast upon them, to render them odious to the World, and unserviceable to the *Common-wealth*.

And to satisfie and ascertain all MEN whereunto all their Motions and Endeavours tend, and what is the ultimate Scope of their Engagement in the

PVBLICK AFFAIRES.

They also that render evill for good, are Our adversaries: because *We* follow the thing that good is.

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A MANIFESTATION FROM

Lieutenant Colonel *John Lilburn*, Master *William Walwyne*, Master *Thomas Prince*, and Master *Richard Overton* (now prisoners in the Tower of *London*) and others, commonly (though unjustly) stiled *Levellers*.

SInce no man is born for himself only, but obliged by the Laws of Nature (which reaches all) of Christianity (which ingages us as Christians) and of Publick Societie and Government, to employ our endeavours for the advancement of a communitive Happinesse, of equall concernment to others as our selves: here have we (according to that measure of understanding God hath dispensed unto us) laboured with much weaknesse indeed, but with integrity of heart, to produce out of the Common Calamities, such a proportion of Freedom and good to the Nation, as might somewhat compensate its many grievances and lasting sufferings: And although in doing thereof we have hitherto reaped only Reproach, and hatred for our good Will, and been faine to wrestle with the violent passions of Powers and Principalities; yet since it is nothing so much as our Blessed Master and his Followers suffered before us, and but what at first we reckoned upon, we cannot be thereby any whit dismayed in the performance of our duties, supported inwardly by the Innocency and evenesse of our Consciences.

'Tis a very great unhappinesse we well know, to be alwayes strugling and striving in the world, and does wholly keep us from the enjoyment of those contentments our severall Conditions reach unto: So that if we should consult only with our selves, and regard only our own ease, Wee should never interpose as we have done, in behalfe of the Common-wealth: But when so much has been done for recovery of our Liberties, and seeing God hath so blest it that which has been done, as thereby to cleer the way, and to afford an opportunity which these 600 years has been desired, but could never be attained to of making this a *truly happy* and *wholly Free* Nation; We think our selves bound by the greatest obligations that may be, to prevent the neglect of this opportunity, and to hinder (as much as lyes in us) that the bloud which has been shed be not spilt like water upon the ground, nor that after the abundant Calamities, which have overspread all quarters of the Land, the change be only Nationall, Nominall, Circumstantiall, whilst the reall Burdens, Grievances, and Bondages, be continued, even when the Monarchy is changed into a Republike.

We are no more concern'd indeed then other men, and could bear the Yoke we believe as easily as others; but since a Common Duty lyes upon every man to be cautious and circumspect in behalfe of his Country, especially while the Government thereof is setling, other mens neglect is so far we thinke from being a just motive to us of the like sloath animated

inanimiadvertency, as that it rather requires of us an increase of care and circumspection. which if it produces not so good a settlement as ought to be, yet certainly it will prevent its being so bad as otherwise it would be, if we should all only mind our particular callings and imployments.

So that although personally we may suffer, yet our solace is that the Common-wealth is thereby some gainer, and we doubt not but that God in his due time will so cleerly dispel the Clouds of Ignominy and Obloquy which now surround us by keeping our hearts upright and our spirits sincerely publike, that every good man will give us the right hand of fellowship, and be even sorry that they have been estranged, and so hardly opinionated against us: We question not but that in time the reason of such misprisions will appeare to be in their eyes, and not in our Actions, in the false Representation of things to them and improper glosses that are put upon every thing we do or say: In our own behalfe we have as yet said nothing, trusting that either shame and Christian duty would restraine men from making so bold with others good Name and Reputation, or that the sincerity of our actions would evince the falshood of these scandals, and prevent the Peoples Beliefe of them; But we have found that with too much greedinesse they suck in Reports that tend to the discredit of others, and that our silence gives encouragement to bad Rumors of us; so that in all places they are spread, and industriously propagated as well amongst them that know us, as them that know us not; the tift being fed with Jealousies that there is more in our designs then appeares, that there is something of danger in the bottom of our hearts, not yet discovered: that we are driven on by others, that we are even disconcerted and irresolved, that no body yet knowes what we would have, or where our desires will end; whilst they that know us not are made believe any strange conceit of us, that we would Level all mens estates, that we would have no distinction of Orders and Dignities amongst men, that we are indeed for no government, but a Popular confusion; and then againe that we have bin Agents for the King, and now for the Queen; That we are Atheists, Antiscripturists, Jesuites and indeed any thing, that is hatefull and of evill repute amongst men.

All which we could without observance pass over, remembring what is promised to be the Portion of good men, were the damage only personall, but since the ends of such Rumors are purposely to make us useleſſe and unserviceable to the Common-wealth, we are necessitated to open our breasts and shew the world our inides, for removing of those scandalls that lye upon us, and likewise for manifesting plainly and particularly what our desires are, and in what we will center and acquiesce: all which we shall present to publike view and consideration, not pertinatiously or Magisterially, as concluding other mens judgements, but manifesting our own, for our further vindication, and for the procuring of a Bond and lasting establishment for the Commonwealth.

First, Then it will be requisite that we expresse our selves concerning Levelling, for which we suppose is commonly meant an equalling of mens estates, and taking away the proper right and Title that every man has to what is his own. This as we have formerly declared against, particularly in our petition of the 21 of Sept. so do we again professe that to attempt an inducing the same is most injurious, unlesse there did precede an universall assent thereunto from all and every one of the People. Nor doe we, under favour, judge it within the Power of a Representative it selfe, because although their power is supreame, yet it is but depitative and of trust, and consequently must be restrained expresly or tacitely, to some particulars essential as well to the Peoples safety and freedom as to the present Government.

The Community amongst the primitive Christians, was *Voluntary*, not *Coactive*; they

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brought their goods and laid them at the Apostles feet, they were not imposed on by them, it was the effect of their Charity and heavenly mindedness, which the blessed Apostles begot in them, and not the Injunction of any Constitution, which as it was but for a short time done, and in but two or three places, that the Scripture makes mention of, so does the very doing of it there, and the Apostles answer to him that detained a part, imply that it was not esteemed a duty, but reckoned a voluntary act occasioned by the abundant measure of faith that was in those Christians and Apostles.

We profess therefore, that we never had it in our thoughts to Level mens estates, it being the utmost of our aime that the Common-wealth be reduced to such a passe that every man may with as much security as may be enjoy his propriety.

We know very well that in all Ages those men that engage themselves against Tyranny, unjust and Arbitrary proceedings in Magistrats, have suffered under such appellations, the People being purposely frighted from that which is good by insinuations of imaginary evill.

But be it so, we must notwithstanding discharge our Duties, which being performed, the successe is in Gods hand to whose good pleasure we must leave the steering of mens spirits, our only certainty being Tranquillity of mind, and peace of Conscience.

For distinction of Orders and Dignities, We think them so far needfull, as they are animosities of vertue, or requisite for the maintenance of the Magistracy and Government, we thinke they were never intended for the nourishment of Ambition, or subjugation of the People but only to preserve the due respect and obedience in the People which is necessary for the better execution of the Laws.

That we are for Government and against Popular Confusion, we conceive all our actions declare, when rightly considered, our aim having bin all along to reduce it as near as might be to perfection, and certainly we know very well the pravity and corruption of mans heart is such, that there could be no living without it, and that though Tyranny is so excessively bad, yet of the two extreames, Confusion is the worst: Tis somewhat a strange consequence to infer that because we have laboured so earnestly for a good Government, therefore we would have none at all; Because we would have the dead and exorbitant Branches pruned, and better scions grafted, therefore we would pluck the Tree up by the roots.

Yet thus have we been misconceived, and misrepresented to the world, under which we must suffer, till God sees it fitting in his good time to cleer such harsh mistakes, by which many, even good men keep a distance from us.

For those weake suppositions of some of us being Agents for the King or Queen, we think it needful to say no more but this, That though we have not bin any way violent against the persons of them, or their Partie, as having aimed at the conversion of all, and the destruction of none, yet doe we verily beleeve that those Principles and Maxims of Government which are most fundamentally opposite to the Prerogativ, and the Kings interest, take their first rise and originall from us; many whereof though at first started at, and disown'd by those that professed the greatest opposition to him, have yet since been taken up by them and put in practise: and this we think is sufficient, though much more might be said to cleer us from any Agency for that Party.

It is likewise suggested that we are acted by others, who have other ends then appear to us; we answer, That that cannot be, since every thing has its rise amongst our selves, and since those things we bring to light cannot conduce to the ends of any but the publike weale of the Nation.

All our Desires, Petitions and Papers are directly opposite to all corrupt Interests; no,

have

have any credit with us, but persons well known, and of certain abode, and such as have given sound and undeniable testimonies of the truth of their affection to their Country: Besides, the things we promote, are not good only in appearance, but sensibly so: not moulded nor contrived by the subtill or politick Principles of the World, but plainly produced and nakedly sent, without any illuminating arts, relying wholly upon the apparent and universall beleefe they carry in themselves; and that is it which convinces and engages us in the promotion thereof. So that that suggestion has not indeed any foundation in itself, but is purposely framed, as we conceive, to make us afraid one of another, and to disable us in the promotion of those good things that tend to the freedom and happinesse of the Common-wealth.

For our being Jesuits, either in Order or Principles, as 'tis severally reported of us; Though the easiest Negative is hardly proved; yet we can say, That those on whom the first is principally fix'd, are married, and were never over Sea: and we think Marriage is never dispenc'd withall in that Order, and that none can be admitted into the Order but such as are personally present. 'Tis hard that we are put to expresse thus much; and haply we might better passe such reports over in silence; but that we beleeve the very mentioning of them publickly, will be an answer to them, and make such as foment them asham'd of such generally condemned wayes of discrediting and blasting the Reputation of other men. For the principles of Jesuits, we professe we know not what they are; but they are generally said to be full of craft and worldly policy; and therefore exceedingly different from that plainnesse and simplicity that is apparantly visible in all our proceedings.

Whereas its said, we are Atheists and Antiscripturists, we professe that we beleeve there is one eternall and omnipotent God, the Author and Preserver of all things in the world. To whose will and directions, written first in our hearts, and afterwards in his blessed Word, we ought to square our actions and conversations. And though we are not so strict upon the formall and Ceremonial part of his Service, the method, manner, and personall injunction being not so clearly made out unto us, nor the necessary requisites which his Officers and Ministers ought to be furnished withall as yet appearing to some of us in any that pretend thereunto: yet for the manifestation of Gods love in Christ, it is cleerly assented unto by us; and the practicall and most reall part of Religion is as readily submitted unto by us, as being, in our apprehensions, the most eminent and the most excellent in the world, and as proceeding from no other but that God who is Goodnesse it self: and we humbly desire his Goodnesse daily more and more to conform our hearts to a willing and sincere obedience thereunto.

For our not being preferred to Offices and Places of profit and credit, which is urged to be the ground of our dissatisfaction, we say, That although we know no reason why we should not be equally capable of them with other men, nor why our publick Affection should be any barr or hinderance thereunto: Yet on the other side, we suppose we can truly say of our selves, that we have not been so earnest and solicitous after them as others: and that in the Catalogue of Suitors, very few that are reckoned of us, are to be found. We are very sorry that so generall a change of Officers is proposed, which we judge of no small disparagement to our Cause; and do think it best, that in removals of that kinde, the ground should not be difference in opinion, either in Religious or Civil Matters, but corruption or breach of Trust; considering the misery which befalls whole Families upon such Changes; and that discontents are thereby increased: Whereas we hold it necessary that all wayes of composure and acquieting those storms which the preceding differences and distractions have begotten, be with utmost care and prudence endeavoured.

And

And whereas 'tis urged, That if we were in power, we would tear our selves as Tyrannically as others have done: We confess indeed, that the experimentall defections of so many men as have succeeded in Authority, and the exceeding difference we have hitherto found in the same men in a low and in an exalted condition, makes us even mistrust our own hearts, and hardly believe our own Resolutions of the contrary. And therefore we have proposed such an Establishment; as supposing men to be too flexible and yeelding to worldly Temptations, they should not yet have a means or opportunity either to injure particulars, or prejudice the Publick, without extreme hazard, and apparent danger to themselves. Besides, to the objection we have further to say, That we aim not at power in our selves, our Principles and Desires being in no measure of self-concernment: nor do we relie for obtaining the same upon strength, or a forcible obstruction; but solely upon that inbred and perswasive power that is in all good and just things, to make their own way in the hearts of men, and so to procure their own Establishment.

And that makes us at this time naked and defenceless as we are, and amidst so many discouragements on all hands to persevere in our motions and desires of good to the Nation; although disowned therein at such a time when the doing thereof can be interpreted no other but a politick delivering us up to slaughter, by such as we took for Friends, our brethren of severall Churches; and for whom with truth of affection we have even in the most difficult times done many Services: all which, and whatsoever else can be done against us, we shall reckon but as badges of our sincerity, and be no whit discouraged thereby from the discharge of our duties.

For the dis-satisfactions that be upon many good mens spirits, for that they are not ascertained whereunto all our motions tend, and in what they will center,

Though, we conceive, they may have received some general satisfaction from what we have formerly at severall times propounded; yet since they were not disposed into such a form and condition as to become practicable; we have, with the best care and abilities God hath afforded us, cast the same into a Modell and Platform, which we shall speedily present unto the view and consideration of all, as the *Standard* and ultimate scope of our Designes, that so (in case of approvall) it may be subscribed and returned as agreed upon by the People. And thus far, we conceive, we may without offence or prejudice to Authority, proceed; and which we the rather do, because we know no better, and indeed no other way or means (but by such an Agreement) to remove (as much as may be) all disgusts and heart-burnings, and to settle the Common-wealth upon the fairest probabilities of a lasting Peace, and contentfull Establishment.

The Agreement of the People which was presented by his Excellency and the Officers of the Army to the Right Honourable the Commons in Parliament, although in many things short (according to our apprehensions) of what is necessary for the good of the Common-wealth, and satisfaction of the People; particularly, in that it containeth no provision for the certain removall of notorious and generally complained of grievances: And although it hath some things of much hazard to the Publick,——— yet, had it been put in execution, we should scarcely have interrupted the proceedings thereof, since therein is contained many things of great and important concernment to the Common-wealth. But seeing the time proposed therein for reducing the same into practice, is now past, and that likewise the generality of the people have not, or do not approve of the same, for the reasons (as we suppose) fore-mentioned: We have thought fit to revise it, making onely such alterations therein as we conceive really necessary for the welfare, security and safety of the People, together with additionall Provisions for the

taking away of those Burdens and Grievances which may without evill prejudice to the Management of publick Affairs be removed.

And because it is essentiall to the nature of such an Agreement to take its rise from the People, we have therefore purposely declined the presentment thereof to the Parliament: and conceive it may speedily proceed to Subscription; and so to further practice, without any interruption to this Representative, untill the season pickt out in the Agreement, for the assembling another: By whose immediate succession, without any intervall, the Affairs of the Common-wealth may suffer no stop or intermission.

Lastly, We conceive we are much mistaken in being judged impatient, and over-violent in our motions for the publick Good. To which we answer, That could we have had any assurance that what is desired should have otherwise, or by any have been done; and had not had some taste of the relinquishments of many good things that were promised, we should not have been so earnest and urgent for the doing thereof.

Though we know likewise it hath been very customary in such heretofore as never intended any freedom to the Nation, to except only against the season, and to protract the time so long, till they became sufficiently impowered to justifie the totall denyall and refusall thereof. However, the main reason of our proceeding as we do, is, because we prefer the way of a Setlement by an Agreement of the People before any other whatsoever.

And thus the world may clearly see what we are, and what we aym at: We are altogether ignorant, and do from our hearts abominate all designes and contrivances of dangerous consequence which we are said (but God knows, untruly) to be labouring withall. Peace and Freedom is our Designe; by War we were never gainers, nor ever wish to be: and under bondage we have been hitherto sufferers. We desire however, that what is past may be forgotten, provided the Common wealth may have amends made it for the time to come. And this from our soul we desire.

Having no mens persons in hatred, and judging it needfull that all other respects whatsoever are to give way to the good of the Common-wealth, and this is the very truth and inside of our hearts.

From the Tower,
April 14. 1649.

John Lilburne
William Walwyn
Thomas Prince
Richard Overton.

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